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What Teacher Educators Learned about Negotiating Power Relationships During Lesson Study Planning

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The purpose of this study was for eight university-based teacher educators to experience Lesson Study planning in order to gain a deeper understanding of the power relationships our teacher candidates experience in student teaching. Data included six video-recorded and transcribed planning sessions. Data analysis focused on the power relationships evident in the teacher educators' lesson planning process, including positions of power that were identified as sole leadership, challenged leadership, and shared leadership. Implications for incorporating lesson study with teacher candidates include increased sensitivity to power dynamics and leadership roles during planning.
Keywords: Lesson Study, Planning, Teacher Candidates, Power Relationships

During a major revision of our secondary teacher preparation program, eight university-based teacher educators decided to incorporate Lesson Study (LS) as a means to help our teacher candidates (TCs) explore pedagogical thinking, to promote K-12 student growth and learning, and to increase connections among university faculty, university supervisors, TCs, and cooperating teachers (CTs). In thinking about this innovation, we decided to test the process ourselves, as a way to both gain deeper understandings about the nuances of LS and to better understand our TCs experiences in schools. Therefore, the purpose of this study was for us to experience the Lesson Study process in order to gain a deeper understanding of the power relationships our teacher candidates experience in student teaching.

Our decision to examine *power* is important in that our TCs are in contexts with clear hierarchical power structures. As TCs in their student teaching placements, they may occupy the

lower rungs of these communities of practice simply based on their experience, especially when compared to CTs, university faculty, and supervisors. Our hope was that gaining insights into how these power structures manifest within the context of LS would inform our use of LS in our TCs' preparation. Our research question, therefore, was the following:

What power dynamics were present during Lesson Study planning?

Review of Literature

Lesson study is a "comprehensive and well-articulated process for examining practice" (Fernandez, Cannon, & Chokshi, 2003, p. 171). In the LS approach, a community of teachers collaborates in developing a single lesson. After collectively considering how the lesson fits with the school's overall goals and predicting how students will respond based on experience, student knowledge, and/or typical student misconceptions, one teacher implements the focal lesson. The other teachers in the group observe the lesson, focusing primarily on the students, with the intended purpose of observing and collecting data on student responses. After the lesson, the group meets to discuss and debrief the lesson, and to decide the extent to which they met the instructional goals. Then the teachers revise the lesson as needed and reteach the lesson to a different group of students (Stepanek, Appel, Leong, Mangan, & Mitchell, 2007). This reteaching may consist of the same teacher with a new group of students, or it may be a different teacher with a different class, depending on school context. This process may be repeated several times, with the same lesson being retaught with different groups of students, but ideally with all participating teachers observing the lesson. The benefits of LS include the development of a shared educational vision of the teacher participants and the overall strengthening of their professional practices as educators (Lewis, Perry, & Murata, 2006).

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Stigler and Hiebert (1999) popularized LS in the U.S. as a new way to think about professional development. A group of educators who were trying to understand why Japan's students scored so much higher than students in the U.S. in mathematics suggested that one of the reasons for Japan's successful schools could be their method of professional development. These educators discovered that Japanese teachers had developed a way to plan lessons and examine student achievement in a method, translated by Makoto Yoshida, as LS (1999).

Lesson Study and Teacher Preparation

Research on LS in teacher preparation programs has shown that its use has a number of benefits. When participating in LS teams, TCs and CTs are more likely to have explicit discussions about pedagogy and a more direct focus on the learning process (Kotelawala, 2012). Co-planning with an experienced teacher benefits the TC by providing ideas for both the content of the lesson and the structure of lesson plans (Gurl, 2011; Suh, King, & Weiss, 2014). Additionally, Schipper, Goei, Vreis, and Veen (2017) found that TCs developed more adaptive planning while participating in LS, and Cajkler and Wood (2016) found that TCs were able to use more conceptual thinking and look beyond a checklist approach. Finally, Munthe, Bjuland, and Helgevold (2016) found that when participating in LS, TCs were able to shift the focus of teaching from themselves to their students.

Planning was not the only aspect of LS that improved the TC experience. Participating as an observer on a LS team improved TCs' ability to observe and gather evidence about student learning (Sims & Walsh, 2009). Even working in LS teams in university classrooms and micro teaching the lesson with other TCs can help TCs rehearse key instructional practices (Ball & Forzani, 2011; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013). And, generally, LS has been found as a

way of helping TCs clarify "practical knowledge" about teaching (Trapero, et al., 2014) and instructional practices (Huang, Barlow, & Haupt, 2017).

Power Dynamics during LS Planning

Since a critical component of LS is planning the lesson, our study focused on what happened during our planning sessions. Although there are several books and articles written about LS implementation (e.g., Lewis & Hurd, 2011), there is little attention given to the social dynamics and unequal power relationships among LS planners. Recently, Saito and Atencio (2013) discussed the issues of unequal power relationships among veteran teachers, new teachers, and outside consultants that caused an imbalance of contributions in planning lessons. Saito and Atencio suggest that teachers who perceive themselves as less powerful indicate their resistance through silence or lack of paying attention. We build on this work by specifically examining, in detail, how power relationships were manifest in the LS work we, as teacher educators, engaged in with the understanding that "everyone experiences the world differently depending upon his or her sociohistorical situatedness" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 14).

Methodology

The study took place in a teacher preparation program for secondary teachers (grades 6-12) at a large, urban university in the northwestern United States. Eight faculty who taught in the program collaborated in the LS process, and five continued with the research and data analysis. We used a naturalistic, qualitative design for this study (Maxwell, 2013). Because we were studying our own practices, we were mindful that we were participant observers in the inquiry process (Spradley, 1980). Committed to documenting our process of LS planning and implementation, we video recorded our six planning sessions (each about 2 hours long). Two graduate students, familiar with the voices of the faculty transcribed these recordings. The

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planning meetings were typically two weeks apart from November through early February with the lesson implemented with three cohorts of TCs in late February.

Each of the six planning sessions included collaborative work on the lesson plan itself, which was a shared document that any member of the group could edit. We marked changes to the file with a date and time stamp that included attribution to the author. The historical record of edits and revisions provided evidence of each member's contributions, although we recognize that at times one person may simply have transcribed a contribution another member of the group had spoken aloud. As such, with our focus on power relationships throughout this process, the data that were included for analysis for this study focused on the transcripts of the six planning sessions.

Participants

The eight faculty who participated in this study had varying degrees of experience. Kirsten (pseudonyms used for all faculty involved) is a senior tenured faculty member with combined teaching experience of over 40 years in K-12 schools and universities. As lead researcher and facilitator of the LS process, Kirsten organized and facilitated most of the planning meetings and guided the qualitative research process. Erica is a senior tenured faculty member with combined teaching experience of over 20 years in K-12 schools and universities. She has written extensively in her field and has also conducted research and written about the LS process. Cindy is a tenure-line faculty member with 35 years of experience in K-12 schools and universities, including eight years as a school administrator, with experience facilitating in-service teacher planning. Grace is a tenure-line faculty member with over 20 years of K-12 teaching experience. Beth holds a clinical faculty position, having taught over thirty years in K-12 schools and universities. Ben is the newest clinical faculty member among the group with

sixteen years of K-12 and university experience. Javier, also a clinical faculty member, has more years of experience in K-12 schools including administrative leadership than other faculty participants, which contributed to his cultural capital. Shari held a part-time clinical faculty position and was retired from thirty years of teaching in K-12 schools. Although eager participants throughout the LS process and data collection, Beth, Javier and Shari did not choose to participate in the data *analysis* portion of this research.

Data Analysis

Five of the eight faculty collaborated in data analysis. Collaborative data analysis has both strengths and weaknesses as "multiple minds bring multiple ways of analyzing and interpreting the data" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 34). Even though multiple researchers were analyzing the data, we followed the advice of MacQueen, McLellan-Lemand, Bartholow, and Milstein (2008) who suggest that one member of the research team assume responsibility for keeping the codebook. All of us contributed our input using a shared document, but one member was the final arbiter of the codes.

Before coding, each of us read the planning session transcript at least twice. Then we independently coded ten pages of one session. We compiled the list of codes, discussed and revised them, and developed a list of codes for first-cycle coding. Three researchers independently coded two transcripts; then two other researchers recoded them for reliability purposes. Each of us wrote analytical memos while coding.

In the spirit of "thinking with theory*"* as described by Jackson and Mazzei's (2013) book on analyzing qualitative research, we began analyzing data as we developed code maps and wrote analytical memos. After the initial coding, three of the researchers met to discuss the analysis and develop second level codes and processes. We noted differences in the quantity and

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frequency of contributions made by planning team members and determined that power and status could be a factor in the differences; we identified three discussion dynamics that seemed relevant to our work: sole leadership, challenged leadership, and shared leadership. Then all five researchers coded one transcript with the second level codes. For reliability, we had pairs read over the summaries and make comments either confirming or adding a different perspective. We then read the data by codes across all planning sessions to determine our findings. We also conducted informal member checks by having each researcher read multiple drafts of the findings and provide each one with the opportunity to make comments and changes.

Findings

This aspect of our research focused on our power relationships in the LS process, specifically during planning. During second level coding, we identified themes of sole leadership, challenged leadership, and shared leadership**.**

Sole leadership

In entering into this collaborative work, we identified at least 59 utterances or exchanges in which power relationships between group members that showed one leader. For example, Kirsten, a group member who began this work in a position of power and authority, commonly said things such as, “Let me move this forward. What I would like is….” (Kirsten, Jan. 7). Far more subtle was the way the weaker members’ ideas met silence or quick dismissal, such as when Beth suggested we use a pre- and post- test as part of our lesson, which was dismissed by Kirsten, who stated, “You don’t need pre and post” (Kirsten, Jan 7). Kirsten was sensitive to time and was quick to move the conversation ahead, exemplified in the January 7 transcript when she used the word “forward” 11 times and the word “move” 12 times. “I’m trying to move us forward.” “Let me move this [idea] forward.” Kirsten used this wording twice in quick

succession after a brief period where multiple group members were talking at the same time, making the overall conversation difficult to track. Within this same conversation, other group members began to echo and emulate her language, evidenced in statements made by Javier, a group member with generally less power: "Moving forward, this set of data…." On multiple occasions, Kirsten would respond to comments that might sidetrack a conversation with "I see that being in a different lesson" (Dec 17), or "We'll work it out, Cindy" (Jan. 7) implying that that a topic should be discussed at other times. Kirsten usually kept control of the discussion, responding to generally posed questions and steering the conversation towards decisions with comments such as "I would suggest that that is all part of the lesson, that those kinds of questions are part of the lesson, but that is not part of reflection" (Dec. 17). Other members of the group affirmed her position of power, rarely challenging her moves to focus on specific topics or to wrap up particular points.

Challenged leadership

There were 13 instances of power relationships being challenged as the group engaged in the collaborative lesson planning. We defined a move as challenging when it had the effect of refocusing or stalling progress on the lesson in order to move forward with a common vision. An example of this was when Kirsten begins to discuss how we would focus our observations, but Erica stopped Kirsten by saying, "Could we stop here for a second?" (Jan. 28). This move resulted in Erica taking the conversation back to an earlier, unresolved issue to clarify what we wanted to hear from TCs when we requested they make observations and list wonderings about the data they were reviewing. Another instance took place on February 4 when we were discussing the exit/reflection questions. Cindy was describing edits she would like to make to the questions. Kirsten challenged Cindy by stating "let me back up here." She urged Cindy and

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others to link the questions to the lesson objectives and teacher candidate learning. Kirsten did not take control of the conversation but continued to press the group about the purpose of the exit/reflection questions.

Group members used phrases; such as "Before we go on, can we clarify?" (Dec. 17), "Could we stop here for a second?" (Jan. 28), and "Let me back up here..." (Feb. 4) at various points in the planning meetings. While these phrases "softened" the action, the result was respectfully and temporarily shifting the direction of the conversation, but in a way that the power was not shifted or relinquished. If the action had instead shifted the conversation completely rather than just refocusing for a short time, then the challenge would be one that shifted the power.

Shared Leadership

Less common but still noteworthy were the moments of shared leadership, wherein the structural hierarchical relationships seemed to be less evident and prominent. We identified six instances in our transcripts in which there was a block of conversation with no clear leader and with no one in power. We termed these instances *shared leadership* because there did not seem to be anyone in a power position. Interestingly, the content of these segments seems to center on procedural issues rather than the content of the lesson. All eight of the faculty members contributed to these segments of the conversation as demonstrated in the excerpt below.

Ben: I was wondering, would we record the group discussion by just putting an iPad in the middle of each table group?

Kirsten: We are doing the same thing as here [with two video cameras].

Ben: But will it capture the group discussion. [Everyone talking at once]

Beth: What about the device that is for [monitoring] each little group? Can we use that, Erica?

Erica: It doesn't record.

Beth: Oh, it doesn't.

Ben: You can just use an iPad. Throw an iPad in the middle of the table.

Kirsten: Let's ask the question, do we need that for our dataset?

Grace: We may be really overwhelmed with data if we record every small group conversation.

Kirsten: I kind of like the idea of the [iPad]. My question would be would we record one small group? So what do you guys think about having that additional data … What do you think?

Erica: My experience with audio recording small groups is that if there are other group discussions going on, the audio is just not useful.

In these moments, that might be characterized as problem solving, the group members shared experiences, put ideas on the table, added onto ideas, listened to one another with seeming authenticity, and without immediate dismissal or redirection. These interactions represent a shared form of power within the group.

Discussion

When planning, either in a Lesson Study situation or generally when co-planning lessons, there are opportunities for a variety of leadership structures. Through our collaboration, we learned how these roles felt and wanted to help our TCs work strategically. We wanted our TCs to be aware of the varied roles collaborators may take in the planning process, and to work within the discussions to take on an increasingly strong leadership presence over the course of the year. For example, it would be appropriate for the CT to be a leader in co-planning during the initial weeks, or even months, of a student teaching placement but over time, as the TC takes on

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more responsibility in the classroom, they should also be ready to exert more leadership in planning.

We also wanted the TCs to confront the power dynamics present when co-planning a lesson. Because our student teaching model includes co-teaching, this was familiar territory for our TCs, CTs, and university supervisors since they had attended co-teaching workshops together where they had time to co-plan and learned specific co-teaching strategies they could implement. Some faculty co-developed with their TCs, a set of roles that are useful when co-planning while other faculty provided the roles to their TCs. Shown in Figure 1 is an example of the roles that could rotate among members and include a facilitator, record keeper, and process monitor. The intention was to provide structure that would better assure involvement from all individuals in critical ways during the planning in hopes of holding all members accountable for equitable interactions.

Figure 1. Planning Group Roles

Facilitator	
● leads discussions ● helps members clarify points ● assures that all voices are heard	● asks questions: *At our last meeting we decided _____, let's begin with updates from those members.* *What do you mean when you say _____?* *What do you think, _____?*
Record Keeper	
	● asks questions:

• keeps a public record of the group's ideas and progress • checks to be sure that ideas are clear and accurate • highlights and summarizes the ideas of the group	*I think I heard you say_____, is that correct?* *Does this match what you were thinking?* *How would you like me to record this idea?*
Process Monitor • monitors time and helps to keep the group stay on task • finds compromise • enforces the norms	• asks questions *We've spent x minutes on _____, should we move on or resolve this first?* *Are we able to come to consensus on _____?* *We haven't heard from ___, what would you like to add?* *What do others think about _____?*

Conclusions

The relationships and power dynamics of our LS planning were complex. Examining the group's power structure and ways of interaction prior to the LS project helped all of the faculty involved think more strategically about how to help TCs co-plan with their CTs and begin to take more of a leadership role as the year moved on. We learned how difficult it was to change leadership structures over time, and we learned that we would need to work with our TCs

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explicitly to help them take over a leadership role so that they would leave our program with the knowledge they needed to work with other teachers in collaborative settings.

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